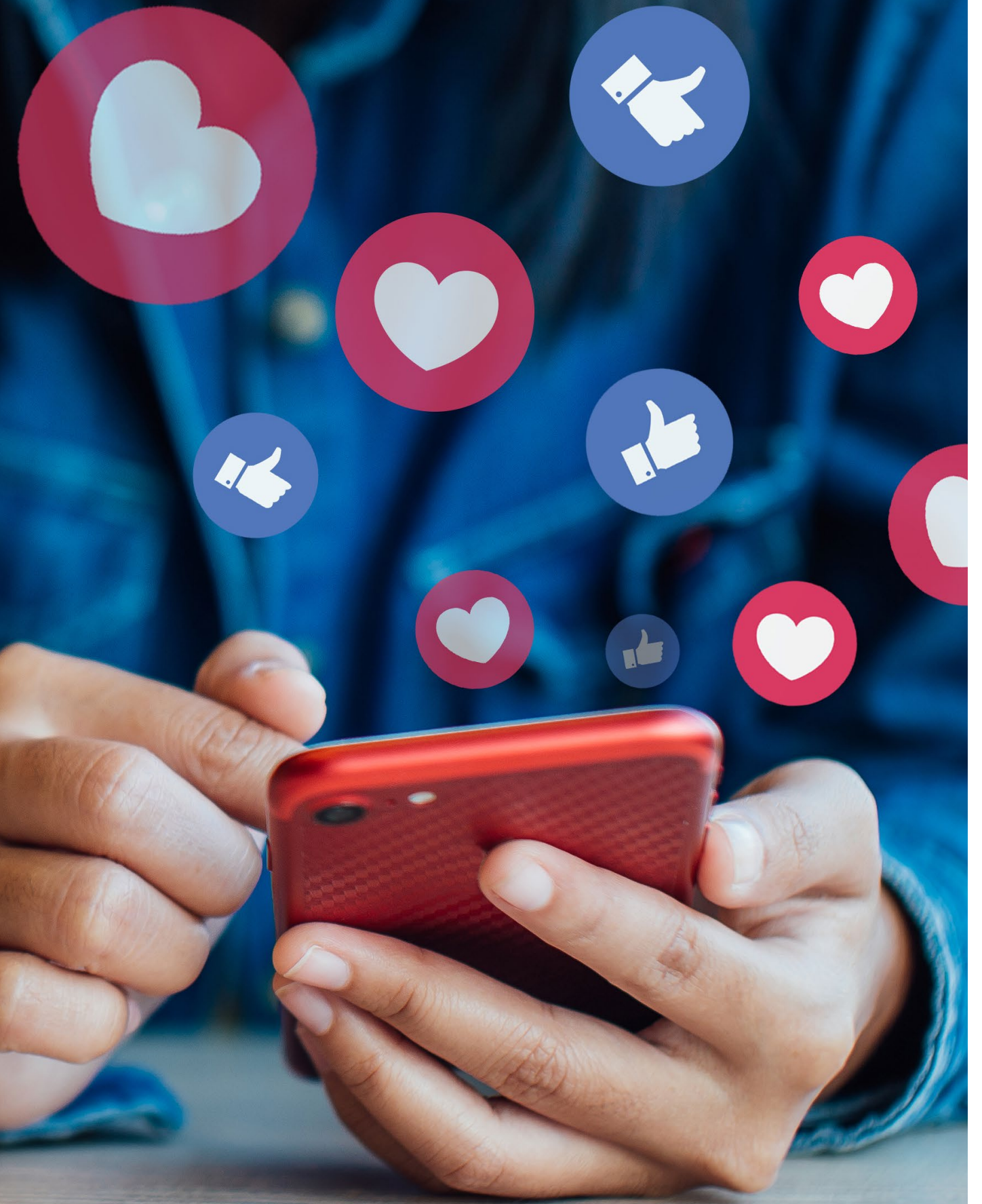




Small Business Guide to

# Social Media Marketing





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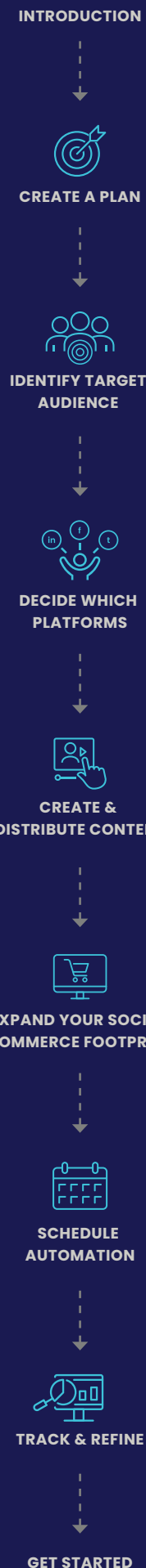
Social media is one of the best things that's ever happened to small businesses. Not only is social media incredibly affordable compared to traditional marketing, it offers the potential to find, connect, and build relationships with your specific audience in a highly targeted way.

However, with so many platforms to choose from, social media marketing can feel daunting — almost like a full-time job in itself. Today, there are more than [5.17 billion active social media users](#), so how do you even start to go about reaching the ones most relevant to your business? Is it enough to just have Facebook and

Instagram pages, or do you need to join Pinterest, TikTok, LinkedIn, Snapchat, Reddit, YouTube, and WhatsApp as well?

If social media is relatively new to your brand, you'll need to start with a good foundation. On the other hand, if your company has been active on social media

for a while, there are always new ways to refine your social media marketing plan to optimize results. Whether you're just dipping your toe into social media or you've been swimming in it for a while, this guide can help take your social media marketing to the next level.



## 1. Create a plan with measurable goals

Before doing anything else, you first need to identify the goals you want to achieve through social media marketing. Otherwise, it can be too easy to just create a bunch of social media pages and focus on “vanity” metrics such as the number of likes, shares, and retweets that don’t accurately measure the success of your social media efforts.

If you haven’t done so already, start by creating SMART social media goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound). These goals should specifically support your business goals, such as attracting X number of new customers by year end. Your social media initiatives could specifically support this business goal by setting a target conversion rate of five percent in the first two quarters of the year. (The conversion rate measures how many visitors take a desired action after visiting a page, such

as signing up for your newsletter, downloading a gated asset, or registering for an event.) A high conversion rate indicates that your target audience is interested in what you have to offer, which will help to keep them coming back and hopefully convert them into new customers.

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**Conversion rate measures how many visitors take a desired action after visiting a page.**

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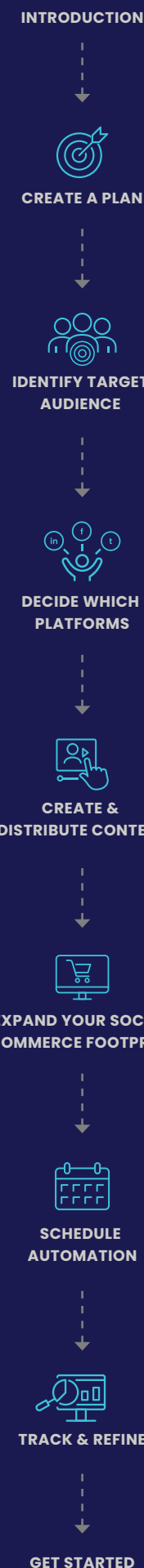
This is just one example of how your social media plan should map to your business goals. It also ensures you have effective key performance indicators (KPIs) to help you monitor your progress or determine where to refine your tactics.

## 2. Identify your target audience

As a business owner or entrepreneur, you probably have a good idea of the target market you’re trying to reach through your social media marketing strategy. However, if you still need to create or refine your audience demographics, our [buyer persona template](#) can help you get started. Although buyer personas are fictionalized representations of typical customers, you should still use detailed market data that includes buyer demographics, motivations, occupations, education, and challenges to inform them. This helps you know exactly what makes customers purchase a product or service so you can give them the right content and tools to make a decision.



Download our [buyer persona template](#) to help you clearly identify your target personas.



Although social media marketing can feel like you're casting a wide net across a big ocean, it is in fact one of the best ways to target a very specific segment. You can start by knowing who your current customers are, including their purchase histories, preferences, and more. But if you want to target a different customer base with new products and services, then you may want to dig deeper into social media analytics. A number of social media management tools can help you analyze online data such as top trending hashtags, referral sites, and other social media pages that are relevant to your business. This will help you create content that specifically targets your desired audience.

### 3. Decide which platforms are relevant to your business

Do you know where your customers and prospects spend most of their time online? It can be tempting to make assumptions,

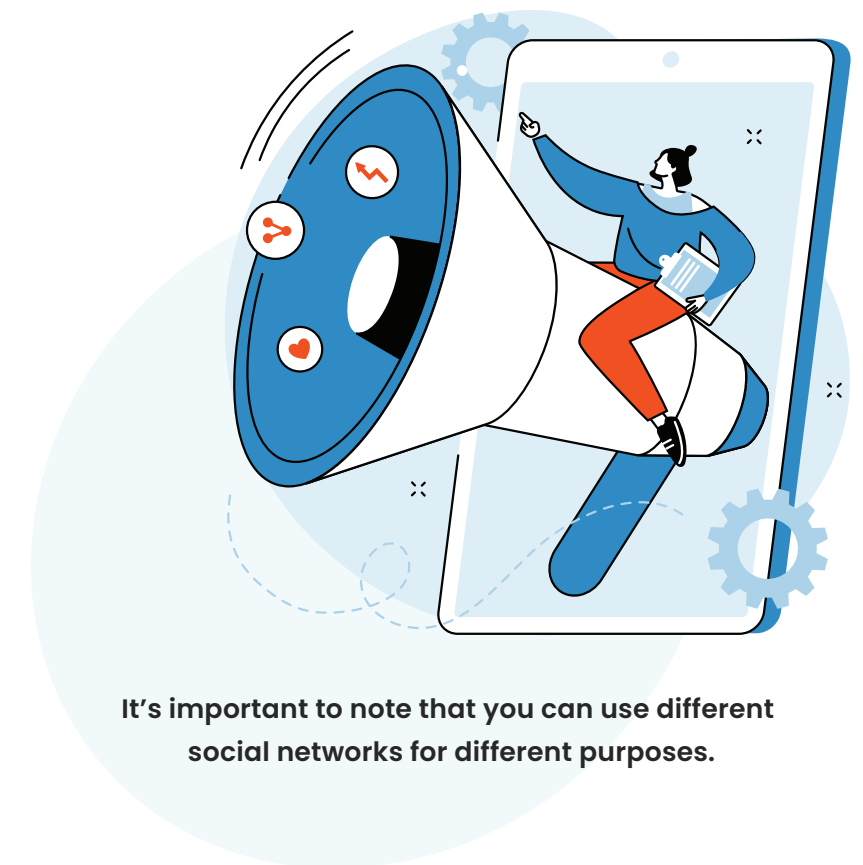
but be sure to check the latest [demographic data about social media users](#). The results may surprise you!

For one thing, the average Internet user typically has more than one social media account, which means you may want to have a presence on more than one platform. Although Facebook and YouTube are the two most [widely used online platforms](#), you may want to add X, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn, Reddit, and even TikTok to your social media mix depending on the results of your market research.

Here are a few questions to consider when deciding which social media platforms best align with your business and target audiences:

#### Where is your target audience?

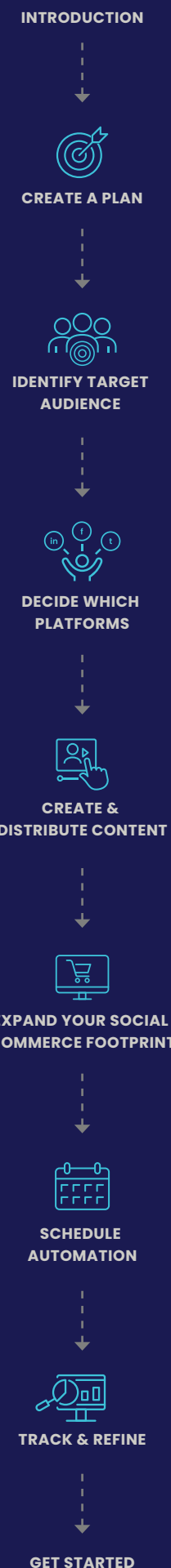
Understanding general social media trends is helpful, but you should also conduct your own research about your customers. How do they find you and where do you interact with them most frequently?



It's important to note that you can use different social networks for different purposes.

#### What are your business goals?

It's important to note that you can use different social networks for different purposes. For instance, you may choose to use Facebook to build your customer base by providing daily, relevant content about your business (such as daily lunch specials for a restaurant). Or, you might use YouTube and Instagram to post compelling video content such as tutorials or fun, slice-of-life videos about your business to increase brand awareness.



### How much can you invest in social media platforms?

Think of your investment in terms of both time and money. Who will maintain your social media pages, how often, and how much it will cost? You should allot a certain amount of time daily to create and upload new content, respond to comments and feedback, and plan future social media campaigns. Will you have the time to manage all this yourself, or will you need to hire additional help (either third-party or in-house) to support your social media initiatives? This may also help you determine how many social media pages you can reasonably maintain.

## 4. Create and distribute the right, high-quality content

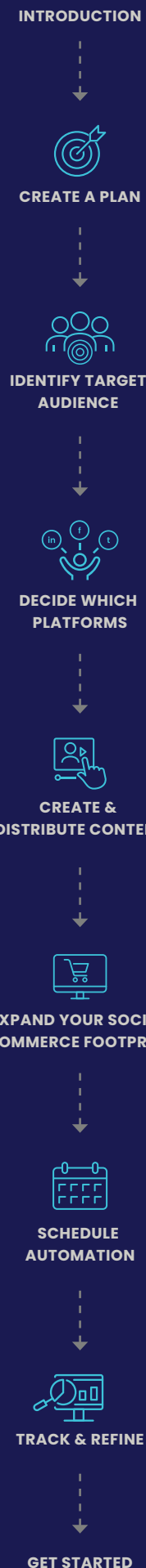
No matter how many social media pages you manage, you want to promote the right content to the right audience on the

right social media channels. This is the key to building customer relationships and brand awareness across various platforms. For example, depending on your target audience, Instagram stories might be a great way to share short videos or picture compilations promoting your new service or sharing highlights from a recent event.

A [content marketing framework](#) helps ensure your social media content aligns with your SMART business goals. It's important to remember that you don't necessarily have to create separate content for each platform — repurposing content is one of the best ways to save time, money, and your sanity. For instance, you can create and promote a customer spotlight across your Facebook and Instagram pages, or turn an existing blog into a how-to video for YouTube.

Here are some other simple and effective marketing tips to promote and distribute your social media content:

- Contact influencers on social media and ask them to share or comment on your content.
- Submit your content to relevant social media communities.
- Include relevant SEO keywords in your social posts.
- Add social sharing buttons to your content, which can generate up to [7x more social mentions](#).
- Promote content such as events and giveaways through sponsored ads on Facebook, X, and LinkedIn.
- Post the same content more than once, perhaps with a few tweaks. You may reach viewers who missed it the first time.
- Add relevant hashtags to your posts to make it easier for X users to find your content.
- Run social media contests and promotions to generate excitement and get users to share your posts.



## 5. Expand your social commerce footprint

Social commerce uses social media platforms to support the full range of customer engagement: from initial product search and discovery to product purchase, post-purchase support, and customer feedback. In short, social commerce is a totally streamlined sales funnel that takes customers from Internet search to purchase in minutes or even seconds. Unlike other types of eCommerce, where customers typically buy from an online third party, social commerce gives companies the opportunity to engage with customers at every single point of the sales process.

Social commerce has been around for a while, but with the massive expansion of contactless shopping in 2020 due to coronavirus, many small businesses had to adopt new sales channels to keep their businesses going. By June 2020, **18.3% of U.S. adults** had made a purchase through Facebook, and another 11.1% via Instagram.

This trend is only expected to keep growing. For instance, in the U.S., retail social commerce sales are **expected to reach between \$100 billion and \$107 billion** in 2025.

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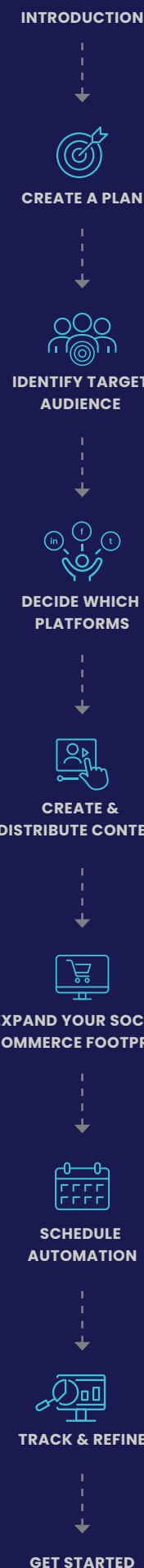
**Social commerce is a streamlined sales funnel that takes customers from Internet search to purchase; giving you the opportunity to engage at every point of the sales process.**

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It's pretty clear that social commerce offers big advantages to smaller businesses. For one thing, it increases your sales potential by enabling customers to purchase directly through your social media sites instead of a third party. Social media customers may

also click through to your company website to browse other products, read your blog, check out promotions, and more. This doesn't just foster brand engagement, it can also boost your search engine rankings because Google tracks this additional traffic and uses it to improve your visibility on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs).

Social commerce also makes it incredibly easy for marketers to communicate with existing and potential customers. You can gather feedback and answer questions right on your social pages, and other visitors can take note of how you engage with customers. Better communication leads to better customer relationships – and happy customers are likely to make future purchases and recommend your business to others.



## 6. Save time with scheduling and automation

If there's one thing most small business owners could use more of, it's time. And, as most of us know, posting on social media can consume hours without us even realizing it. This is time that very few small businesses have to waste.

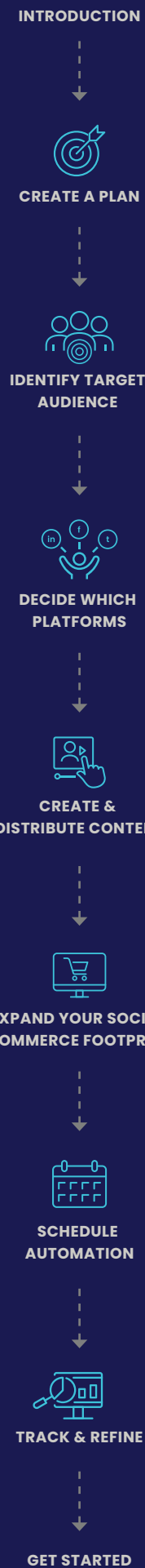
For this reason, it's essential to structure your social content calendar and determine how many hours per day or week you can reasonably spend on social media marketing. Here are some tips to help you efficiently budget your time spent on social media:

1. **Create social posts and content in advance.** This allows you to dedicate a single time slot every day or week to plan out your social postings. Then you can use a [social media scheduling tool](#) to post them automatically at just the right time.
2. **Incorporate automation tools in the right places.** Chances are, you've reached out to a company through Facebook Messenger and received an automatic reply thanking you for your message and perhaps offering additional help. [Chatbots](#) can go even further by helping customers track order status and deliveries, find and order products, check return policies, book appointments, and more. This type of automation can help answer routine customer service questions so you can focus on customer engagement activities that can't (or shouldn't) be automated, such as prefabricated responses on your social media pages.
3. **Don't reinvent the wheel.** Check out these [4 must-have social media marketing tools](#) for your small business.

## 7. Track performance and refine as necessary to meet your SMART goals.

It's important to know that there's no such thing as "set it and forget it" in social media marketing. You have to regularly keep up your social media performance to ensure it's meeting your SMART goals.

You can use a number of analytics tools to help you visualize performance on both a micro and macro level. Some analytics tools are provided by social media platforms themselves, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, X, and YouTube. There are also a range of free and paid social media analytics tools available to help you determine whether or not your social media investment is delivering the results you expect.



Read this article to learn [7 ways to get more engagement on social media](#)

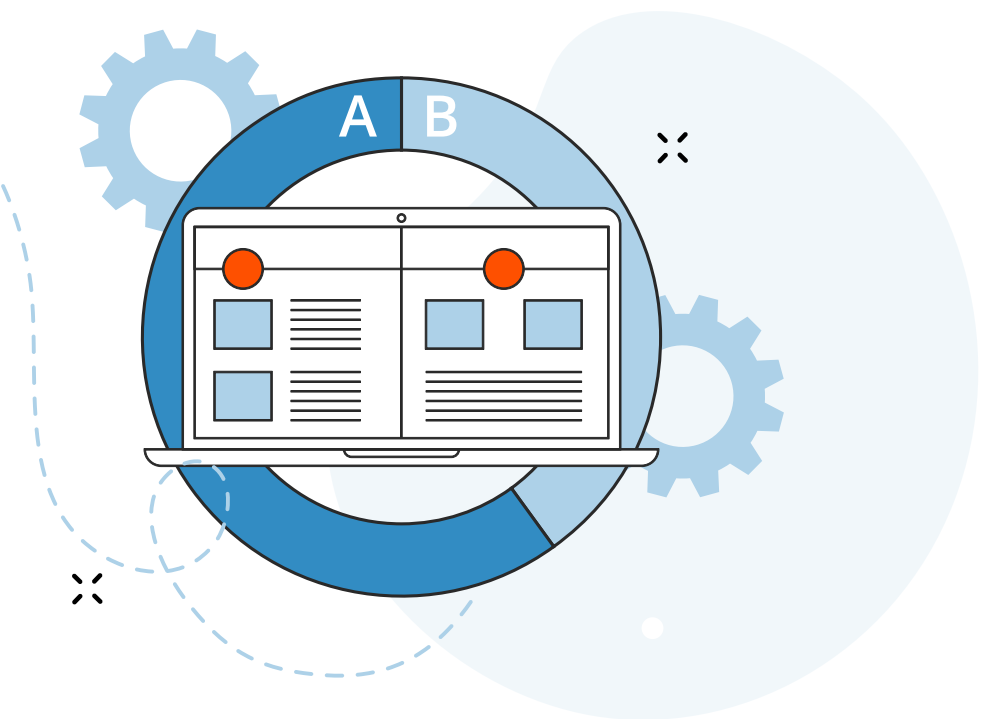
If your social content is not performing as well as you'd like, you can try simple tactics such as A/B testing to determine if small content variations, such as different post headlines, content formats, or calls to action perform better among different audiences.

Of course, you're not likely to test every single social post, but by checking in occasionally, you can get a better sense of what's resonating with your audience. This is one of the things that makes social media an ideal marketing platform for small businesses: You can create, distribute, test, and refine content in real time, and use the feedback you receive to continually improve your progress and performance.

## Next step: Getting started

This guide has covered some of the basics of social media marketing and why it's an invaluable tool for smaller companies. Although the nuts and bolts go much deeper than what's covered in this guide, it offers a helpful overview of the basics – whether you're just getting started or want to optimize the performance of your current social media marketing efforts.

In the end, social media marketing is all about delivering personalized customer experiences. Discover how Act! can help you build and retain loyal customer relationships – [try it free for 14 days!](#)



**A/B testing is a marketing method which involves implementing a piece of content twice, one as a 'control' and another time with a variation. The purpose is to analyze the results following the release of the content and assess which performs better.**





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